

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 IO-13 TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1450

INFO AMEMBASSY COTONOU PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 2098

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PEPR, GB, DM

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO TRANSPORT BENINESE

REF: (A) STATE 193057, (B)LIBREVILLE 2077, (C) STATE 191856

1. I INFORMED FONMIN MARTIN BONGO AFTERNOON AUG 1 THAT WE DID NOT WISH BECOME INVOLVED IN AIRLIFT OF BENINESE, DRAWING ON REFTELS (A) AND (B). BONGO WAS DISAPPOINTED, BUT TOOK IT REASONABLY WELL, AND ASSURED ME THAT OUR DECISION WOULD MAKE NO DIFFERENCE IN STATE OF OUR FRIENDLY RELATIONS. HE PICKED UP HUMAN RIGHTS THEME, SAYING THAT GABON DID NOT IN FACT WISH TO INVOLVE HER FRIENDS IN WHAT WAS A PURELY AFRICAN CONTROVERSY. GABON HAD EVERYTHING IT NEEDED TO ACCOMPLISH REPATRIATION ITSELF OR COULD PAY FOR IT. PROBLEM WAS, AS STATED BEFORE, THAT THEY COULD NOT USE OWN AIRCRAFT AND WERE THEREFORE SIMPLY LOOKING FOR AIRCRAFT ASSISTANCE FROM FRIENDLY COUNTRIES. IN ANY CASE, REPATRIATION WAS PROCEEDING-- 400OR 500 HAD LEFT BY SEA MORNING JULY 31 AND OTHERS WERE LEAVING BY AIR ON THEIR OWN ("THEY WANT TO GO HOME," HE SAID). HE CONFIRMED THAT MEETING WITH DIPLOMATIC CORPS MORNING AUG 2 WILL BE TO DISCUSS BENIN AFFAIR.

2. AFTER MY PRESENTATION, BONGO ASKED FOR PIECE OF PAPER THAT
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HE COULD TRANSMIT TO PRES. BONGO. SINCE I WAS WORKING FROM ROUGH NOTES (AND, IN PLACES, PROBABLY ROUGH FRENCH), I WAS IN NO POSITION TO GIVE HIM ANYTHING, BUT PROMISED SEE WHAT I COULD DO. FOLLOWING IS THEREFORE MY COMPLETE PRESENTATION. I WOULD APPRECIATE IT IF DEPARTMENT WOULD TRANSLATE IT AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE AND RETURN IT TO ME FOR TRANSMISSION TO FONMIN AS "BOUT DE PAPIER," UNLESS DEPT HAS OBJECTION (I DO NOT) TO MAKING

PIECE OF PAPER AVAILABLE:

A. AFTER OPENING PLEASANTRIES, QUOTE, I AM INSTRUCTED, EXCELLENCY, TO TELL YOU THAT WE HAVE CONSIDERED VERY CAREFULLY YOUR REQUEST, BUT WE REGRET TO TELL YOU THAT IN THIS CASE WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO HELP YOU, FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

--WE FRANKLY DO NOT WISH TO BE INVOLVED IN SUCH A DISPUTE BETWEEN TWO AFRICAN COUNTRIES, AND, INDEED, IN CONFORMITY WITH OUR BASIC POLICY FOR AFRICA, WE CONTINUE TO HOPE THAT SUCH PROBLEMS CAN BE RESOLVED BETWEEN OUR AFRICAN FRIENDS THEMSELVES.

--THERE IS ALSO, EXCELLENCY, A SPECIAL PROBLEM THAT I DO NOT WISH TO HIDE. AS I NOTED BEFORE, BECAUSE THE QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IS A BASIC ELEMENT OF OUR WORLD POLICY, WE ARE CONCERNED WITH THIS QUESTION, AND THIS ASPECT WAS ALSO A STRONG ELEMENT IN OUR DECISION. UP TO THIS POINT, YOUR PROBLEM WITH THE BENINESE HAS NOT RECEIVED MUCH ATTENTION IN THE AMERICAN PRESS. WE MAKE NO JUDGEMENT WHATSOEVER ON THE MERITS OF THE DISPUTE WHICH IS NOT OUR CONCERN, BUT THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE BELIEVES STRONGLY THAT IF THE PROBLEM BEGINS TO RECEIVE MORE PUBLICITY AT HOME, AND THIS WOULD CERTAINLY HAPPEN IF THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT WERE TO BECOME INVOLVED LOGISTICALLY, THERE WILL BE A SUBSTANTIAL AND ADVERSE REACTION FROM THE AMERICAN PUBLIC AND I CONGRESS WITH REGARD TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTION. IN THE PROCESS, BOTH OF OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS, AMERICAN AS WELL AS GABONESE, WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL

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CRITICIZED. WE DO NOT SEE SUCH A DEVELOPMENT AS DESIRABLE IN BILATERAL TERMS, AND THINK THAT IT WOULD NOT HELP IN FURTHERING OUR FRIENDLY RELATIONS. END QUOTE.

3. SORRY TO REQUEST TRANSLATION, BUT WE DO NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT CAPABILITY HERE TO PUT IT IN FLAWLESS FRENCH. TIENKEN

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